



Infectious Disease Prevention – Gonorrhea

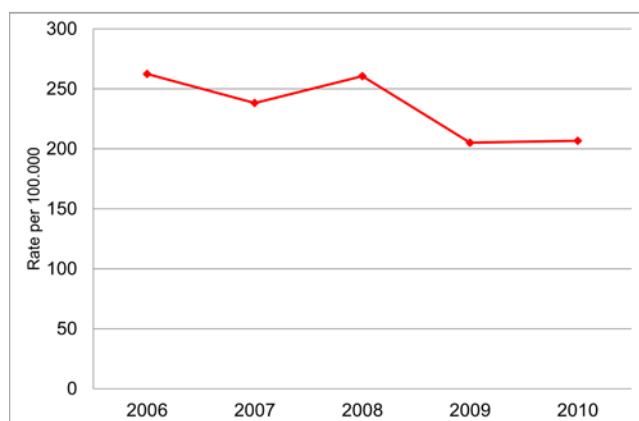
Colorado has a rate of gonorrhea among 15- to 29-year-olds that is twice the national rate for people of all ages. While the number and rate of people with gonorrhea has decreased over the last five years, it is still at unacceptable rates, especially in some subsets of the population.

Why is this important?

Gonorrhea – a preventable, treatable disease – has serious potential complications. Even though effective prevention methods and treatment have been available for many years, this disease continues to affect several thousand people in Colorado each year. Drug resistance to gonorrhea is developing in other countries and has begun to be identified in the United States, increasing the impact of this disease. Stopping the spread of this disease will reduce the financial and social impact.

Where are we?

Rate of Gonorrhea infections for Colorado 15-29 year olds, 2006-2010



Source: Disease Control and Environmental Epidemiology Division, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

Where do we want to be?

Decrease gonorrhea among Colorado's 15- to 29-year old age group by 3 percent a year.

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What is being done?

Department staff conducts follow-up on reported cases of gonorrhea to ensure adequate treatment, provide prevention counseling and make referrals for follow-up care as warranted.

The department partners with the Colorado Department of Education and other organizations serving adolescents and youth to support the provision of evidence-based, medically accurate and age-appropriate information related to sexual health and the prevention of sexually transmitted infections including gonorrhea.

Ensuring comprehensive sexual health education is provided in school systems in Colorado is probably the most direct intervention with the greatest likelihood of success. The state-level policy needed to support this step already is in place with the combination of legislation and Colorado Department of Education curriculum standards.

Ensuring access to screening and treatment for affected populations must occur for prevention to be successful. This requires a system of access to care that reduces/eliminates existing barriers, including financial and social barriers. Information must be provided to affected communities and those who serve them to support effective decision-making related to prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections such as gonorrhea.

High-risk groups

While the specific demographic data related to gonorrhea in Colorado is limited, based on the information available, the most disproportionately affected populations are African-Americans and Hispanics of all races from 15 to 29 years old.

The gonorrhea rate for 15- to 29-year-olds is even more troubling when considering these are the most likely child-bearing years. Infections due to gonorrhea are a major cause of pelvic inflammatory disease. Pelvic inflammatory disease may lead to serious outcomes in women including infertility, ectopic pregnancy and chronic pelvic pain. In addition, several studies provide evidence that gonococcal infections may facilitate the transmission of HIV infection.

Underlying causes

Research related to the underlying causes of the disproportionate rates of infection has not been conducted in Colorado. However, a review of social indicators in affected populations supports a relationship between most socioeconomic indicators (education, income, unemployment/underemployment, housing, etc.) and increased rates of infection consistent with other areas of the country.

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